



**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**TESTIMONY OF:  
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INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE  
CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT**

**March 25, 2015**

**Introduction**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee members, my name is Lawrence Mirabal, and I am the Chief Financial Officer, Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico. I express gratitude for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of my college: for clarification, our official name is the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development (IAIA). IAIA was established in 1962 as the only Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school teaching Native arts and culture. IAIA is the birthplace of contemporary Native art.

In 1986, IAIA became an independent college chartered by the United States Congress to empower creativity and leadership in Native arts and culture. The enabling legislation states that Native arts and cultures are Indigenous to the United States and thus must be enthusiastically maintained and supported so that they are not lost for future generations. IAIA is only one of three schools in the United States chartered directly by the Congress. The other two are Gallaudet University and Howard University, located in the District of Columbia.

IAIA's congressional non-profit charter encourages IAIA to raise funds from private sources while authorizing basic, core funding from the United States Congress. Over the course of 29 years, IAIA has taken this charge to raise private funds very seriously. In the past five fiscal years we have raised approximately \$51 million in funds from external sources—almost equal to the \$51.9 million we have received in federal core funding. It is our intention to maintain, if not exceed, that level of external fund raising in the future. In the past several years we raised \$4.5 million from federal agencies, the state of New Mexico and private donors to fund our new Welcome Center; renovate the vacated space in the administration/academic building for painting studios, classrooms and expanding the student gallery; and equipping and staffing the Student Health Clinic.

## **Program and Campus Development**

IAIA has evolved from a high school in the early years to a college offering bachelor's programs in Studio Arts, Cinematic Arts and Technology, Creative Writing, Museum Studies and Indigenous Liberal Studies. In 2013, we expanded our mission to include our first graduate program, an MFA in Creative Writing, and it is proving to be extremely successful with more than 60 students enrolled. At the May 16, 2015, commencement ceremonies, our first Master's degrees will be awarded. IAIA currently serves more than 500 students representing 75 tribes from across Indian country.

IAIA is unique in that it is accredited by two organizations – the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design. We are proud of our dual accreditation and work hard to maintain it.

### **FY 15 Budget**

On behalf of IAIA's faculty, staff and students, I express gratitude to the subcommittee for its strong, consistent support for our federal core funding request throughout the FY 2015 appropriations process. IAIA's FY 15 appropriation of \$9,469,000 represents a \$100,000 increase over the amount received in FY 14. Although the enacted core funding level did not include the \$2 million the administration requested for forward funding, this funding level will permit us to address critical strategic priorities: continue our summer school bridge program; support a counselor position in our student support services division that was lost due to the sequester; fund additional faculty positions in our Academic Division; continue to adequately fund our new Master of Fine Arts graduate program in Creative Writing; fund increased facilities operations and maintenance costs; and fund a modest employee cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

### **FY 16 Budget Request**

The President's FY 2016 budget request for IAIA is \$9,619,000 million in federal appropriations, which includes a \$150,000 increase in funding over what was enacted in FY 15. The requested FY 16 baseline federal funding would assist IAIA in addressing the following issues:

- IAIA's student body has more than doubled since 2007. (200 students enrolled in 2007; over 530 enrolled for the 2014 Fall Semester).
- IAIA has added more than 75,000 square feet of operating space with three new campus buildings constructed since November, 2009. Even with LEED designed buildings, energy and maintenance costs have increased. Most recently, IAIA's Welcome Center, a key component in the college's master plan, was completed in March 2014, adding an additional 16,000 square feet that must be maintained for both student and administrative use.

- Sustain and expand the recently restored summer school program, which maximizes the use of IAIA state-of-the-art programs, facilities and equipment by providing key classes in an additional session during the summer months.
- Sustain the recently restored counselor position in student support services.
- Continue funding of three key new faculty and staff positions in the Academic Division.
- Adequately fund our first MFA graduate program in Creative Writing.
- Fund an extremely modest, one-percent faculty and staff cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The ability to award meaningful cost-of-living adjustments is essential retain high caliber faculty and staff. In addition, IAIA continues to absorb fixed cost increases associated with worker's compensation, retirement, health insurance and unemployment benefits.

## **Forward Funding**

Fortunately, the President's FY 16 budget request again asks for \$2 million in forward funding to alleviate the uncertainty caused by continuing resolutions and federal government shutdowns. The sixteen day shutdown in 2013 had devastating effects on faculty, staff and student morale. Rumors flourished that faculty and staff would be furloughed and not receive their paychecks. Students believed that the college would be forced to close and they would be sent home. In addition, continuing resolutions bring their own challenges. It is difficult to plan for the academic year at a college when the funding level is not known until well into a given fiscal year.

IAIA is one of five tribal colleges (along with Navajo Technical University, United Tribes Technical College, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and Haskell Indian Nations University) that do not receive forward funding. The nation's other tribal colleges have received forward funding for the past four years. Forward funding has helped our sister tribal colleges (which are funded under different authorizing legislation from us) by providing greater predictability and timeliness in receiving their core funding. For certain, forward funding would have the same positive impacts on IAIA. As you know, forward funding is not new funding but is rather an advance of funding for the subsequent year.

## **Conclusion**

If IAIA is to continue offering high quality bachelor's and master's degrees in Native arts and culture to American Indian and Alaska Native students and retain excellent faculty and staff, it is imperative that IAIA's FY 16 federal core funding is at the level requested in the President's budget: \$9,619,000. Accordingly, I respectfully request the Subcommittee act again in Fiscal Year 2016 as you did in FY 15 – to support the Administration's request for IAIA core funding in the Independent Agencies title of your

bill. That request once more includes \$2 million in forward funding, which would place IAIA on equal footing with other federally funded colleges and universities and help stabilize all aspects of our operations. Again, we greatly appreciate your consideration.

This concludes my testimony. I again thank the Chairman and the Committee members for the opportunity to speak on behalf of IAIA. I also want to take this opportunity to invite you to visit us in Santa Fe to observe first-hand our beautiful campus and state-of-the-art facilities as well as meet our creative and talented students. I especially extend an invitation to attend IAIA's 2015 Commencement Ceremonies scheduled for 11 A.M., Saturday, May 16, in which we will award our first Master's degrees in Creative Writing. Your presence would honor our graduates and greatly enhance the festivities. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have.